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Sustainable development: International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

Eradication of poverty and other development issues

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

Letter dated 26 September 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Nicaragua to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to ask you to circulate, in connection with items 54 (c), 58 and 71 of the agenda of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly, the attached Appeal to the International Community handed to President Daniel Ortega Saavedra by the leaders of the indigenous Miskito, Sumu-Mayangna and Afro-descendant communities of the Región Autónoma del Atlántico Norte (RAAN), containing the final evaluation of damage and requirements for the revitalization of communities and families affected by Hurricane Felix (see annex).

I should be most grateful if you could have this letter and the annex thereto circulated to all Member States, in accordance with the request by the leaders of the communities concerned that the international community should be informed of the situation in the region. The people of the region fell victim to Hurricane Felix, which recently devastated the northern and Caribbean coast, causing huge damage in human, cultural, environmental and output terms.

In his address to the General Assembly on 25 September 2007, President Daniel Ortega Saavedra informed the members of the international community that they would be receiving the document and he called on the peoples and Governments represented at the United Nations to take note of the emergency facing Nicaragua.

(*Signed*) María **Rubiales de Chamorro**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Nicaragua to the United Nations

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Appeal to the International Community handed to President Daniel Ortega Saavedra by the leaders of the indigenous Miskito, Sumu-Mayangna and Afro-descendant communities of the Región Autónoma del Atlántico Norte (RAAN)

Final evaluation of damage and requirements for the revitalization of communities and families affected by Hurricane Felix

23 September 2007

I. Introduction

1. The Caribbean coast, which is ethnically diverse and culturally rich, occupies 46 per cent of Nicaragua's territory and is divided in two autonomous regions. Its natural and human assets, history, cultural diversity and geographical location are essential elements that allow its inhabitants to enjoy a decent standard of living and that make a real social, economic and political contribution to the country.

2. However, when Hurricane Felix, a category 5 storm, made landfall at dawn on 4 September 2007, in the Región Autónoma del Atlántico Norte, at a point 51 kilometres north of Bilwi, it revealed just how vulnerable systematic impoverishment and exclusion had made Nicaragua's Caribbean region, for the hardest hit were the indigenous (Miskito and Sumu-Mayangna) and Afro-descendant peoples.

3. This is not only a tragedy in human, cultural, ecological and output terms, but also an opportunity for community, district, regional, municipal and national actors to make a concerted and coherent effort to promote regional development.

4. The recently formulated regional development proposal, the work of various sectors in the region, provides a very clear road map for development, and should serve as the foundation for efforts to cope with the emergency and to revive the region.

5. This document details the principal damage caused by Hurricane Felix and establishes the basic framework of action for the next six months, focusing on:

(a) Basic humanitarian assistance for the population affected, in terms of health, food, shelter and social infrastructure;

(b) Rehabilitation of fishery and agricultural output;

(c) Protection against forest fires;

(d) Use of forestry resources for the urgent rehabilitation of housing and infrastructure.

6. Finally, it is important to emphasize that this reconstruction process goes beyond the physical rehabilitation of dwellings and roofs or supplying food to the population. In addressing this emergency, it is important to keep in mind that we are

trying to help the indigenous communities re-establish the very essence of their community life, their identities and their aspirations, all of which were cut short in the early morning of 4 September.

Damage summary

7. Data collected by the regional authorities, in coordination with national Government institutions and the National System for Disaster Prevention, Mitigation and Relief (SINAPRED), indicate that 33,687 families, a total of 198,069 persons, have been affected to date.

8. According to reports from the inhabitants, the number of deaths may be over 300. Various Government institutions confirmed and notarized the deaths of 102 persons, only 67 of whom have been identified, leaving 35 unidentified. In addition, 133 people have been reported as missing; 106 of these reports were notarized.

9. The irreparable loss of human life has been accompanied by an extensive ecological disaster with serious consequences, affecting over 1.3 million hectares, including 477,000 hectares of forest, which were devastated. The cost cannot be measured solely in terms of the quantity of wood lost, but must include the damage to biodiversity and the ecosystem, as well as the disappearance of the historical and cultural reference that this forest represents for the indigenous communities.

10. The infrastructure destroyed consists of 20,394 houses, 57 churches, 102 schools, 43 health centres, 86,538 hectares of traditional and non-traditional crops and 40,011 head of livestock (including both large and small species; 70.8 per cent of the poultry was lost, as was 18.9 per cent of pigs and 10.2 per cent of cattle and a large amount of fishing vessels and equipment (1,366 small boats and 48,355 items of fishing tackle). Five hundred kilometres of all-weather roads, bridges and drains were damaged or destroyed. Particularly significant was the partial destruction of the region's only seaport.

11. The preliminary appraisal of damage caused by the hurricane is around $850 million.

Our response

Food

12. The strategy to address the nutritional needs of the affected population aims to ensure the direct flow of provisions to the communities for six months; provide access to seed and agricultural inputs; replace poultry and small livestock; and provide emergency funding so that the affected fishermen can replace their boats and equipment.

13. By the end of this initial emergency period, basic grains such as beans and corn will have been harvested; root vegetables will have been planted; poultry and small livestock will have been replaced; and fishing production will have resumed.

14. Approximately 18,000 metric tons of provisions are needed for the first six months. International organizations, such as the World Food Programme, and other countries have offered 4,500 metric tons, which are already en route. This leaves a

shortfall of 13,500 metric tons. An estimated $16.5 million is needed to meet the shortfall in food procurement during the emergency period.

Housing and social infrastructure

15. The hurricane destroyed 20,394 homes; rebuilding them will cost US$ 100 million, US$ 4 million of which is urgently needed to provide temporary shelters for homeless families during this critical part of the rainy season.

16. A total of 102 schools were destroyed or damaged. The complete reconstruction of these schools in the medium term will cost $11.4 million. However, 19,800 sheets of zinc are needed immediately to build roofs on the most damaged schools. This will cost $330,000.

17. Fifty-seven churches were destroyed or left without roofs and each requires an average of 200 sheets of zinc. Rebuilding this essential community infrastructure will cost $6.1 million; the cost of immediate urgent repairs is $200,000.

18. An additional $23 million will be needed for reconstruction of the only port in the region with access to the sea. In summary, $148 million is needed to rebuild homes and the social and religious infrastructure.

Risk management

19. Furthermore, as part of overall risk management efforts, there are plans to invest $2.5 million in early warning systems, equipment and civilian training.

20. The aim is to provide each community with at least three safe shelters — a church, a health centre and a school — built using appropriate technology so that they can withstand emergency situations.

Health

21. With respect to health infrastructure, 43 health centres were damaged or destroyed; seven sets of communication equipment, including solar panels and transponders, were destroyed; and 49 units of the cold chain system need to be repaired, replaced or reinstalled to enable epidemiological surveillance.

22. During the emergency period, the three priority areas in health care are:

(a) *Epidemiological surveillance*: Activities include the repair of situation rooms and communication networks, the mobilization of personnel and the repair of the cold chain system.

(b) *Maintenance of health-care services*: Health-care services will be maintained using existing human resources in the region, and available external resources will be stabilized.

(c) *Infrastructure reconstruction and equipment replacement*: The repair or reconstruction of health-care units could cost as much as US$ 1,570,000. The cost of equipment replacement is calculated at $1,230,000.

23. This emergency has underlined the urgent necessity of building a 150-bed regional hospital, which will cost $30 million.

24. In order to maintain health-care services and respond to epidemiological risks, approximately $7.2 million must be invested over the next six months. This sum includes the funds needed to increase human resources within the region.

25. The total amount required for the health sector during the six-month emergency period is $40 million.

Restoration of production capacity

26. The restoration of production capacity will enable the affected population to resume productive lives. Efforts will be focused on agricultural production and fishing.

Agricultural sector

27. In an effort to recover productive stability and boost regional productive capacity, 75.6 thousand acres (75,000 *manzanas*) of wetlands will be rehabilitated for the production of basic grains (beans and corn), root vegetables (cassava and malanga), plantains and fruits and small livestock, particularly pigs and fowl, will be replaced. Some 25,000 rural families will participate in the project.

28. It is estimated that $46 million will be needed for this emergency rehabilitation; the funds will be used for seed, inputs and the replacement of small livestock.

Fishing sector

29. The damage in the fishing sector includes the loss of fishing boats, tackle and equipment. It has been calculated that around 6,000 heads of families in 25 coastal communities make their living from fishing and have lost the immediate capacity to return to work. Of these heads of families, 4,000 are registered small-scale fishermen and 2,000 were divers prior to the hurricane.

30. The emergency rehabilitation programme covers financing for small-scale fishermen who have lost their tackle but not their main equipment and for operational costs.

31. On the other hand, steps are being taken to encourage divers to become small-scale fishermen, including by providing them with necessary equipment and tackle.

32. The total amount required for these two aspects is US$ 21 million — $8 million to finance the existing fishermen and $13 million to help the divers switch to fishing.

Protection and use of forests

33. It is estimated that the hurricane damaged 1,306,580 hectares of forest, 477,000 of which were flattened. The large amount of fallen vegetation presents a serious threat to life in this region because it could cause an outbreak of forest fires. Rapid action must be taken to prevent forest fires and also to make use of the fallen trees so that they may be used for rebuilding and thus spur the economic recovery of the communities.

Fire protection plan

34. The plan for protection against forest fires will be carried out between September 2007 and June 2008 and entails three major activities:

(a) Organization and equipping of 175 community fire brigades, which will entail training, operational activities and the provision of equipment. An estimated $3.5 million will be required.

(b) A dynamic dissemination plan will also be developed in order to raise awareness and educate the public regarding the risks of using fire in agriculture, particularly under the present conditions. This activity will cost approximately $1.5 million.

(c) Rehabilitation of the forest protection infrastructure in the affected areas. This activity involves the construction of 20 forest control towers and 180 bridges and the rehabilitation or clearing of 2,500 kilometres of roads to facilitate access to forest areas. An estimated $10.3 million will be required.

Plan for the use of fallen trees

35. Within the framework of Presidential Decree 92-07, a programme for the use of fallen trees will be implemented to meet the demand for housing rehabilitation and reconstruction for the affected families.

36. This activity includes the procurement of 75 power saws, 30 portable sawmills, 30 small agricultural tractors to transport the wood without causing major damage to the soil, and other smaller tools. This will require a total of $3.0 million over the next six months.

37. The total amount required for the forest sector is $18.3 million.

38. The emergency intervention for the next six months will require a total amount of $292.3 million:

(Thousands of United States dollars)

Food	16 500
Housing rehabilitation and shelter plan	148 000
Risk management	2 500
Health	40 000
Agricultural rehabilitation	46 000
Rehabilitation of the fishing sector	21 000
Protection and use of forests	18 300
Total	**292 300**

Signed by the indigenous community leaders of the Región Autónoma del Atlántico Norte

(*Various signatures*)